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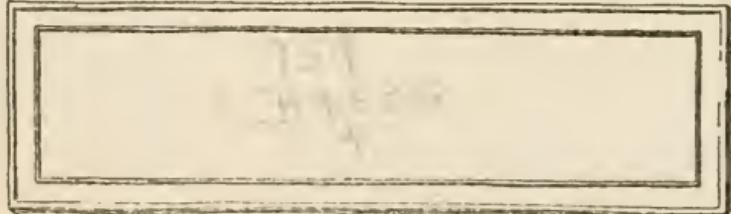
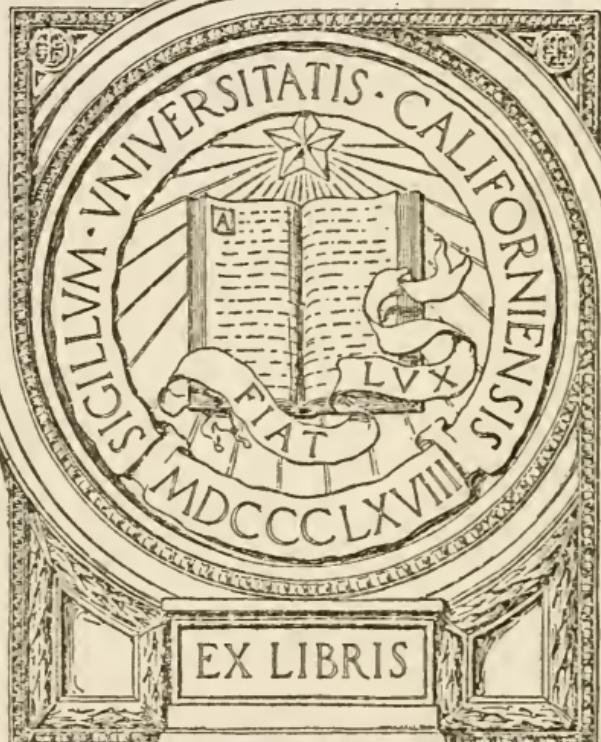
FAIRY BREAD

BY

LAURA BENÉT

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LAURA BENET



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TO MY GRANDMOTHER

MARY LEE ROSE

**“THERE ARE MIRACLES:—AND I HAVE
SEEN ONE.”**

469836

A few of these poems have already appeared in Collier's, The Chimaera, Others, The Masses, The Literary Review, The Lyric, Contemporary Verse, The Century, The Smart Set. The author acknowledges with thanks permission to reprint them here.

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FAIRY BREAD

THE QUEST

I am seeking for my pool.

It lies among the heather,

Where misty mountains gather

Still and cool.

Winds fan its shores and guard its ground —

Yet no breeze brings its murmuring sound.

I am seeking for my ring.

It has fallen in the bushes

Where the golden-hearted thrushes

Used to sing.

Men dig and plant. The earth is tossed —

Yet my lost circlet none have crossed.

I am seeking for my heart.

It left me in the twilight

When the voices of the night

Called apart.

Travellers go far by land and sea —

Yet no one brings my heart to me.

“SHE WANDERED AFTER STRANGE
GODS . . .”

O have you seen my fairy steed?
His eyes are wild, his mane is white,
He feeds upon an elfin weed
In cool of autumn night.

O have you heard my fairy steed,
Whose cry is like a wandering loon?
He mourns some cloudy star-strewn mead
On mountains of the moon.

O have you tamed my fairy horse,
To mount upon his back and ride?
He tears the great trees in his course,
Nor ever turns aside.

'Tis he who tames a fairy thing
Must suffer want and bitter fate!
Deftly the bridles did I fling
That brought him to my gate.

I soothed and fed and tendered him
Sweet herbs and honey in a cup,
And led him in the twilight dim
To where a spring welled up.

But there his wings they waved so bright
Before my eyes, I drooped and slept.
When I awoke, it seemed dark night.
I raised my voice and wept.

Alas, my lightsome fairy steed!
I saw my pastures trampled bare
Where I had sown the springtime seed
And planted flowers rare!

I saw my barns a mass of flame!

His fiery wings had glanced in flight.

And me — a prey to fear and shame —

He left, to seek the light!

CUSHY COW

Cushy cow has curly horns,
Delicate, tipped with brown.
Swifter her hoofs fly backward
Than any bull's in town.

We milk her into great white pails
And crocks of cottage blue,
And her leavings run all over the yard —
Yet our milking is never through!

I found her at smoky twilight
By the well of the pale primrose,
Where grey elves hung on her haunches
And nuzzled her grazing nose.

But as they cried and cheeped to her
And whined both plaintive and shrill,
I caught her by the lock that's loose
And dragged her up Dead Man's Hill !

Awhile she pined for the magic herb,
Awhile for the spring that's young ;
But since my sweetheart has sung to her
She holds a contented tongue.

Yet it's by but a thread and a broken gate
We hold our fairy of kine.

*She suckles elf babies still, by night,
Who wither on cowslip wine!*

“LITTLE FISHES IN GLASS DISHES”

Verdant and glassy
Its sides rise sheerly.
Light frothy bubbles
Float to its surface,
And deep within it
Transparent fishes,
Tiny coiled sea-horses
Swim to and fro.

Steadily swimming,
Warily rising,
Diving and dipping,
Catching at sea-weed,

Snapping at stray flies
And flecks of sunlight,
Ever in motion,—
Prey of a vortex.

Their eyes cryptic,
Stealthy, translucent,
Stare into star-space
Visioning nothing.
A sword-fish grinning
Pursues his neighbor,
A wee mock-turtle
Heavily weeps.

THE PENNY

A penny, a penny small, a penny round!
Why do you bend your eyes upon the ground?

Magical things that leap and frisk
Are conjured up by that copper disk.

Toss it into the green lagoon;
It rises in the round, yellow moon.

Throw it into the cleft yew tree;
The woodcutter finds a treasury.

Spin it on an oak table top;
And skipping lines of rabbits hop.

Roll it under the coach of the bride;
Luck goes over the country side.

Ring it that children's feet may sing
Round barrel organs capering.

Cheaper than silver, dearer than gold.
Thistledown light, yet hard to hold.

A penny, a penny small, a penny gay!
Why do you turn your dancing eyes away?

THE WITCH'S HOUSE

Its wicked little windows leer
Beneath a moldy thatch,
And village children come and peer
Before they lift the latch.

A one-eyed crow hops to the door,
Fat spiders crowd the pane,
And dark herbs scattered on the floor
Waft fragrance down the lane.

It sits so low, the little hutch,
So secret, shy, and squat,
As if in its mysterious clutch
It nursed one knew not what,

That beggars passing by the ditch
Are haunted with desire
To force the door, and see the witch
Vanish in flames of fire!

PITY THE MOON

A withered crone is the moon to-night
Bent, unloved and proud,
Shuffling in the windy light
Through dipping vales of cloud.

Her dreams, her airy, delicate dreams
Are spilled into the sky ;
And, failing the touch of their brittle gleams,
Moon will dwindle and die ;

Greedy stars clutched them as they fell
From the rim of the white, torn track,
But her yawning pocket holds no spell
To conjure her silver back.

THE THRUSH

God bade the birds break not the silent spell
That lay upon the wood.

Longing for liquid notes that never fell
Ached the deep solitude.

The little birds obeyed. No voice awoke.
Dwelling sedate, apart,
Only the thrush, the thrush that never spoke,
Sang from her bursting heart.

PETER

Peter of the brothers three
Loved a life of poesy;
While they stolid bargains drove
He saw movies in the stove.

Peter was a man of peace
Happily he tended geese;
Though his brothers, as they rose,
Ran a motor 'neath his nose.

Peter knew his limitations,—
Never needed intimations
Which tunes he was not to sing
What new cabbage pleased the king.

Peter saw expedience
Was the way of common sense;
Sitting quiet on the down
Grabbed the princess and the crown.

ADVENTURE

Black wave the trees in the forest
And a rough wind hurries by,
But the swineherd's toddling daughter
Knows where fallen pinecones lie.

And girt with a snowy apron
She scampers, alert and gay
To the hidden pool in the hollow
Where the wan witch people play.

They smile, the wee wrinkled women
They creep to her pinafore;
And lay in her lap strange treasures
Trolls brought from the ocean's floor.

And they marvel at her blonde tresses
And braid them with scented fern;
And they lave her dusty, brown ankles
With snow water from the burn.

But nobody listens, or heeds them
The swineherd hews a new trail,
The swineherd's wife in the cottage
Pours the sour milk from the pail.

And little Gerta lags homeward
Dream shod through the shadows deep;
Her eyelids heavy with wonder —
They whisper, “ She's been asleep.”

CIRCLES

“Yes, this is it, the snowy ring —
Drawn with chalk and a piece of string!
Tell me why it was not made square
With four flat corners glittering there?”

“A child’s world knows no certain bound.
Its magic music goes round and round.
A child’s play has no sudden stop:
Look at the whirring flight of a top!

“A child’s mind sketches a shining floor
On which light fancy opens the door.
No end to a child’s soul! Hungrily
It stretches to white infinity.

“Squares are rigid, but circles yield
Like the meadow grass of a springing field!
So here’s the little white circle, meet
For a merry chorus of children’s feet!”

HUMOR

A fairy dances
In upland pastures,
Picking tart crabapples,
Swinging low;
Twisted and green,
Elfin-mouthed, lean,
His feet may be chained
They are never slow.

He slyly peeps under
Bushes of wonder,
Hunts for thistles
In hedgerow trees

And straight thereafter
Tickles to laughter
Solemn asses
On bended knees.

Where his sharp wits go
Occasions grow,
The blind see meadows
Of waving corn;
Men mazed with talking
Find lost hopes walking
When he conjures roses
Out of a thorn.

GARDENS OF BABYLON

Huddled chimneys, grey, forlorn,
In the deadened light of a city morn.

Rooftops ranging, red and high,
Tenement windows glaring, dry.

And — flower pots !

Gaily caparisoned flower pots,
Nodding against the sky !

Fire escapes alive with the green
Of scarlet runner and Indian bean,
Caught in a handful of black dirt,
Carried home in a baby's skirt. . . .

Flower pots !

Verdantly growing flower pots,
Lifting their blooms on high !

Jack and the Beanstalk's magic might—
Vines spring up in a single night!
Old faces soften, children stare
At the slender gardens in the air.

Flower pots!
Meagre little clay flower pots
Bring the glow of the country there!

THE DRAGON'S GRANDMOTHER

Titanic courage nerved this little frame
To grapple fate. Thin, gnome-like, sadly lame,
She steers her cockleshell along its way
With never promise of a better day.

For she is very old, bereft of kin,
Scrubber of basements in the hurrying din
Of the dragon city. Once she fell and lay
Muttering, stricken. Those hours she nearly died.
The priest brought draggled roses. (In her pride
These mark an epoch!) Wizened, beady-eyed,
She trembles forth upon her daily chore. . . .
That withered, red geranium means much more. . . .
You see? — and those cheap chromos by the door!

“ FEATHERS — FLOWERS ”

“Feathers! Don’t fall among ‘em, ma’am!

Sometimes they fills this garret deep.

You can’t see any? Wonder why!

They bresh my face when I’m asleep.

“Yes, three of us was living here,

My mother, sister May, and me.

It’ll be two years in the spring

Since I was left of all the three.

“You see, our trade was day piece-work.

We sorted feathers for the store,

Made flowers — roses, violets —

And piled ‘em up here on the floor.

“Red, blue and yellow and light green —
They was reel pretty when all done;
We’d lay trays on the window sill
To watch ’em shining in the sun.

“One day a lady says to me,
‘I see you keep a flock of birds!’
‘Why, ma’am?’ ‘Because there’s feathers here;
Feathers and feathers!’ Them’s her words.

“When momma and my sister went
Seemed s’if I couldn’t bear that sight!
I dropped the trade and took to sewing
Long as my eyes could stand the light.

“But then, wherever I would turn,
Feathers was flying round my head;
And flowers! I could see them blossom
Through the wall paper by my bed.

“Sometimes they’d float along the ceiling,
One day I found them in the milk ;
And when I’d work at making dresses —
Flowers would burst out of the silk.

“What’s that, ma’am? I should leave this lodging
And move to folks that doesn’t know?
What if the feathers began to flutter,
What if the flowers began to grow?”

ENEMIES

I am afraid of the dark,
That it will not let me alone;
The intimacies of its silence
Would kindle stone.

But I'm more afraid of the light,
For its spaces snatch my breath
And make me question the time
I shall travel with Death.

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